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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the many external expectations confronting persons with disabilities and the skills required to survive and prosper in school, at home, on the job, and in the community. Data were obtained from 155 regular teachers, 110 special educators, 150 parents, and 55 employers through the use of the School Survival Skills Questionnaire. All groups identified the following skills as necessary for successful transition: accepts consequences of own behavior, goes to class every day, arrives at school on time, plans steps to reach a goal, turns in work on time, keeps track of work in an assignment book, takes good care of other people's things, and knows what things he or she does well. The paper concludes that teachers have an obligation to continually modify the training of students with disabilities to incorporate these skills, in order to increase potential transition opportunities. Appendixes contain a copy of the 48-item questionnaire and a list of necessary skills. (JDD)

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EXTERNAL EXPECTATIONS OF TRANSITION

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Abstract

This proposal presents the many external expectations confronting persons with disabilities who are transitioning in a school, home, community or work environment. The data was obtained from teachers, (n=155 regular and 110 special educators) parents (n=150) and employers (n=55) through the use of the School Survival Skills Questionnaire (SSSQ) by Brown, Kerr, Zigmond & Harris (1984). The proposal discusses: 1) the intensity and appropriateness of these expectations. 2) the methodology for skill training, and 3) the continuous process of review and revision of the skills required.

The passage of Public Law 94-142 in 1975 and its amendments, along with other federal mandates, have brought the behavioral standards , expectations and tolerance levels of society into sharp focus. Numerous elements of society have objected to the placement of children with disabilities in the public school system due to some combination of the following factors: (a) an unwillingness to tolerate social behavior(s) in which some children engage, e.g., sexual behavior, overt affection, physical or verbal aggression, etc., (b) a perceived lack of skills in providing for the instructional and behavioral needs of such children, and (c) an unwillingness to invest the time, effort and resources necessary to insure an adequate adjustment (Will, 1984).

In has become apparent through studies of the placement processes involved in implementing the federal mandates that some placements are far better for children with disabilities than others. The intensity and appropriateness of the demand that receiving personnel place upon the mainstreamed children are an important part of this judgement. To date, no one has specifically measured this variable in relationship to the transitional process, in spite of a professional consensus that this should occur (Clark & Kolstoe, 1990; Edgar, 1988; Lieberman, 1991; Smith & Edelen-Smith, 1990).

Transition represents passage to, from, among and within the environments and sub-environments an individual encounters throughout life. The process of developing a realistic transitional plan includes three elements. The first, is establishing the foundation. The foundation uses the special

education program and the regular classrooms to extend opportunities for further skill building, school adjustment and meaningful productivity. It is important that the foundation include preparation for the total person i.e., as a student, worker, citizen, consumer and family member (Smith & Edelen-Smith, 1990; Stodden, 1991).

The second step in transitional planning should result in a description of the current and expected levels of skills required of the individual students. The planning must call for periodic reviews to determine those skill levels and analyze how they may be applied toward advancement within a specific classroom, job, community or family situation. This can and will increase independence within one's class, home and community arrangements. A specific plan for skill training needed to reach the goals of transitioning individuals with handicaps is to be prepared, implemented, monitored and revised as needed (Brolin, 1989; Clarke & Kolstoe, 1990).

Transition services for the individual with disabilities should be a ongoing, continous process of review and revision of the skills required of the environments that the student is confronted with in the total transitional process (Clark & Kolstoe, 1990).

One of the major outcomes of transition planning is the development of a written plan for each student. It is important that the skills determined as being needed for the transition be formalized in a manner similar to the way special education goals and objectives are listed in the individualized education program (IEP). The transition plan should be developed during the IEP meeting as to integrate and incorporate a multidisciplinary planning approach. This

approach will insure that the recommendations in the plan are incorporated into the student's educational program and avoid isolating the planning for transition from the current educational plan. The transition should focus on the skills required to survive and prosper in school, at home, on the job and in the community as well as reflecting individual capabilities and societal require (Burck & Reardon, 1984).

Purpose

This study investigated the relationship between teachers, parents and employers perceptions as to which skills are most necessary for successful transition. Are those individuals with disabilities being effectively prepared for the increased expectations of transition? What do teachers, parents, and employers expect of a person in transition? Which behaviors are viewed as critical for the transition process? Are there discrepancies between the three groups?

METHOD

Subjects

Three groups were included in this survey from the same general locality. In Group one (regular and special educators n=265): One hundred fifty-five (155) regular educators and one hundred ten (110) special educators from three school districts in the lower Alabama area, Group two (parents n=150): one

hundred fifty (150) parents participated in the survey. The third Group (employers n=55) consisted of fifty-five (55) employers located in the Mobile, Alabama metropolian area. The employers were selected because they: a) currently employed individuals with disabilities and/or b) were a service-oriented business.

Instrument

The School Survival Skills Questionaire (SSSQ) (Brown, Kerr, Zigmond & Harris, 1984) was used for this study. From this list of 48 items, the participants identified what they believed were the most critical survival skills (see Appendix A). The participants were asked to rate each statement from 1 to 3, with 1 being associated to the factor they considered to be the most closely related to behaviors exhibited by students as to being successful or unsuccessful in the transitioning process and 3 being the least importantly related to successful transitioning (see Appendix A).

Procedure

The questionnaires were hand delivered to the educators (regular and special) in the school districts, parents in their homes and employers on the job sites. Instructions were given to return the completed questionnaire within a seven day period.

A total of 525 questionnaires were delivered with a return date of 10 days

later. The educator group (regular = 175, special = 125, Total = 300), parent group (150) and employer group (55), received a total of 505 questionnaires (see Table 1).

A total of 155 questionnaires were completed by the the regular educators (88.6%): Nineteen males and 136 females responded, their ages ranged between 22 and 57 years and their teaching experience spanned over thirty five years. One hundred ten (110) questionnaires were completed by the special educators (88%). Eight males and 102 females responded, their ages ranged between 21 and 38 years and their teaching experience spanned over fifteen years. The employers group completed 55 questionnaires (73%). Fifty three males and 2 females responded, with the majority having the title of assistant manager, their job experience spanned 40 years. The number of people their respective businesses employed ranged from as few as two employees up to 250 and 85% of the businesses reponding currently had at least one person with disabilities employed. The parent group completed 137 questionnaires (91%). The gender as to the individual completing questionnaire was not able to be determined (see Table 1).

RESULTS

An analysis of the data was conducted to identify those skills and problem behaviors that received the highest percentage of "Very Important" or "Serious Problem" ratings (see Appendix A). Based on the rank ordering (1 being very important and 3 being of least importance) of the items on the SSSQ, the

highest ranked skills and problem behaviors were compared among the three groups as to what behaviors and skills are needed to be reinforced for successful transition.

Those skills identified by all three groups were as follows:

1. Accepts consequences of own behavior.
2. Goes to class every day.
3. Arrives at school on time.
4. Plans steps to reach a goal.
5. Turns in work on time.
6. Keeps track of work in an assignment book.
7. Takes good care of other people's things.
8. Knows what things he/she does well.

DISCUSSION

One very important aspect surfaced. Educators, parents and employers agreed on the ranking of these eight behaviors as very important to the students with disabilities transition process (see Appendix B, the statements of agreement are indicated by an asterisk).

Understanding these similarities do exist, teachers have an obligation to continually modify the training of students with disabilities. Training should be modified; a) to incorporate those skills employers and parents view as critical and b) to increase potential transition opportunities.

After the agreement on ranking the eight behaviors each group focus shifted. The groups focused within their own arena (see Appendix B, are the items without asterisks).

APPENDIX A

Directions: This is a list of things that might be important for a student to be successful in high school. We would like to know what you think. Please mark each item according to how important you think it really is. If you think it is Very Important, circle number 3. If you think it is Helpful, circle number 2. If you think it is Not Important, circle number 1.

Very Important means this is necessary for doing well in high school.
Helpful means this is helpful, but not necessary for doing well in high school.
Not Important means this is not necessary for doing well in high school.

Statement	Very Important	Helpful	Not Important
1. Turns in work on time.	3	2	1
2. Listens to a lecture and remembers what was heard.	3	2	1
3. Is pleased about other people's achievements.	3	2	1
4. Raises hand to get teacher's attention.	3	2	1
5. Can calm down someone who is upset or angry.	3	2	1
6. Handles criticism.	3	2	1
7. Shows interest in grades.	3	2	1
8. Gives opinions in class even if no one else agrees.	3	2	1
9. Accepts consequences of behavior.	3	2	1
10. Takes good care of other people's things.	3	2	1
11. Knows when to leave someone alone.	3	2	1
12. Sticks up for a friend.	3	2	1
13. Can guess the questions a teacher might ask on a test.	3	2	1
14. Has both male and female friends.	3	2	1
15. Keeps busy while waiting for the teacher's help.	3	2	1
16. Goes to class every day.	3	2	1
17. Pays attention to appearance.	3	2	1
18. Volunteers to answer teacher's questions.	3	2	1
19. Has a sense of humor.	3	2	1
20. Asks to be included in activities with friends.	3	2	1
21. Does what an adult says to do.	3	2	1
22. Turns in neat papers.	3	2	1
23. Behaves differently with some teachers than with others.	3	2	1
24. Is a good sport about winning and losing.	3	2	1
25. Is good at taking tests.	3	2	1
26. Handles getting angry or upset in a way that others think is okay.	3	2	1
27. Writes so people can read it.	3	2	1
28. Has an adult in the school who is interested in her or him.	3	2	1
29. Offers help when a person has a problem.	3	2	1
30. Has some ideas about what to do after leaving high school.	3	2	1
31. Stays cool in a tough situation.	3	2	1
32. Figures out how people will react to her or him.	3	2	1
33. Looks at a person when talking.	3	2	1
34. Arrives at school on time.	3	2	1
35. Knows how someone feels and says the right thing.	3	2	1
36. Goes up and talks to teachers and other adults in the building.	3	2	1
37. Keeps track of work in an assignment book.	3	2	1
38. Answers when someone speaks.	3	2	1
39. Figures out people's moods.	3	2	1
40. Has some close friends.	3	2	1
41. Organizes time and papers for studying.	3	2	1
42. Knows how well she or he is doing in school.	3	2	1
43. Is polite.	3	2	1
44. Talks calmly to an adult when she or he feels unfairly treated.	3	2	1
45. Does a favor for a friend even when it's a hassle.	3	2	1
46. Knows what things she or he does well.	3	2	1
47. Plans steps to reach a goal.	3	2	1
48. Waits for teacher's permission before speaking out.	3	2	1

School survival skills questionnaire (Source: From *The School Survival Skills Project: 1983–84 Annual Report* by M. M. Kerr and N. Zigmond, 1984 [unpublished grant report].

APPENDIX B

SKILLS NEEDED FOR SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION

1. ACCEPTS CONSEQUENCES OF OWN BEHAVIOR.
2. GOES TO CLASS EVERY DAY.
3. ARRIVES AT SCHOOL ON TIME.
4. PLANS STEPS TO REACH A GOAL.
5. TURNS IN WORK ON TIME.
6. KEEPS TRACK OF WORK IN AN ASSIGNMENT BOOK.
7. TAKES GOOD CARE OF OTHER PEOPLE'S THINGS.
8. KNOWS WHAT THINGS HE/SHE DOES WELL.

SKILLS NEEDED TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN TRANSITION

SPECIAL EDUCATORS:

* 1. Accepts consequences of own behavior.
* 2. Goes to class every day.
* 3. Arrives at school on time.
* 4. Turns in work on time.
* 5. Keeps track of work in an assignment book.
* 6. Takes good care of other people's things.
* 7. Knows how well he/she is doing in school.
  8. Organizes time & papers for studying.
* 9. Plans steps to reach a goal.

REGULAR TEACHERS:

* 1. Turns in work on time.
* 2. Keeps track of work in an assignment book.
  3. Organizes time & papers for studying.
* 4. Plans steps to reach a goal.
* 5. Arrives at school on time.
* 6. Takes good care of other people's things.
* 7. Knows how well he/she is doing in school.
* 8. Accepts consequences of own behavior.
* 9. Goes to class everyday.

PARENTS:

* 1. Turns in work on time.
2. Listens to a lecture & remembers what was said.
3. Raises hand to get teacher's attention.
* 4. Accepts consequences of own behavior.
* 5. Takes good care of other people's things.
6. Handles angry in an acceptable manner.
7. Has an adult in school who is interested in him/her.
8. Has some ideas about what to do after leaving school.
* 9. Keeps track of work in an assignment book.
10. Answers when someone speaks.
11. Has some close friends.
*12. Knows what things she/he does well.
*13. Plans steps to reach a goal.
*14. Goes to class everyday.
*15. Arrives at school on time.
*16. Knows how well he/she is doing in school.

EMPLOYERS:

1. Handles criticism.
* 2. Accepts consequences of own behavior.
* 3. Takes good care of other people's things.
4. Knows when to leave someone alone.
* 5. Goes to class every day.
6. Does what an adult says to do.
7. Knows how well he/she is doing in school.
8. Is polite.
9. Talks calmly to an adult when he/she feels unfairly treated.
* 10. Knows what things he/she does well.
* 11. Plans steps to reach a goal.
* 12. Arrives at school on time.
* 13. Turns in work on time.
* 14. Keeps track of work in assignment book.

Table 1

Questionnaire Respondents

Educator Group (300)	n	Male	Female
Regular Teachers	155	19	136
Special Educators	110	08	102
Employer Group (55)	**n**	**Male**	**Female**
Managers	05	05	0
Assistant Managers	50	48	2
Parent Group (150)	**n**	**Male**	**Female**
Parents	137	?	?

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